

# King Mackerel Reign In Dispute Over Menhaden Fishing Off OIB

BY SUSAN USHER

The king lives. Long live the king.

Protection of the king mackerel and the local sportfishing and tourism industries hammered a strong blow Tuesday to efforts to reach a workable agreement between local beach communities and menhaden fisheries whose vessels regularly ply the ocean off Brunswick County's beaches.

As Ocean Isle Beach commissioners discussed an agreement tentatively reached among the two groups at a Sept. 21 work session, Commissioners Ken Proctor and Kendall Suh shook their heads "no." They decided that the proposed agreement was unacceptable, and that stronger measures were needed than asking the Division of Marine Fisheries to keep in mind the town's original request to keep the menhaden boats farther off the beaches.

"The tournaments provide a lot of benefit to this area," said Suh, noting that fishery vessels working local waters have taken a million to 1½ million fish in a single day, raising questions about the potential for overfishing a shared resource.

"To let menhaden fisheries from Dare County and elsewhere come in and take that resource when it benefits us locally is unconscionable," said Suh. "It seriously jeopardizes our town's fishing area."

Instead the town will ask the commission to ban the boats from operating off Ocean Isle Beach, period, following the examples of states to the east and west.

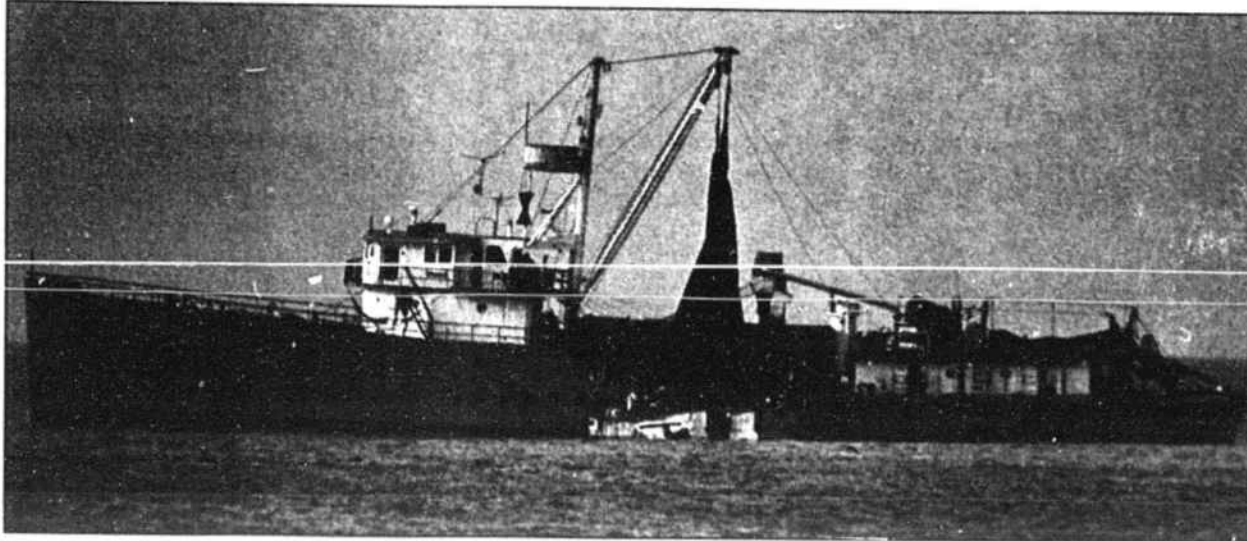
Vessels from three menhaden companies, Beaufort Fisheries in North Carolina and AMPRO and Zapata Protein out of Virginia, routinely work the waters off Brunswick County, one of the few remaining areas along the East Coast where the fishery is still allowed to operate, said Suh.

South Carolina has restricted menhaden fishing along the entire South Carolina coast and Dare County has set limits off its beaches as well.

"It's a dying industry and these people are trying to hold on," said Suh. "But we shouldn't be made out to be the bad guys here."

He cited fish spills and related clean-up problems, the fisheries' past track record of non-cooperation with beach communities and king fishermen, and competition rather than sharing of the resource.

At the Sept. 21 meeting, representatives of three towns and one fishery agreed on fishing alert procedures, spill notification and clean-up efforts, fishing 750 feet away from marked piers and other points to be included in an agreement drafted by Mike Street of the Division of Marine Fisheries no later than Oct. 14.



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

**IN A CHANGE OF HEART** Tuesday, Ocean Isle Beach commissioners voted to ask the state to ban menhaden fishing off the island, rejecting a compromise agreement that would allow boats like this one seen off Holden Beach Monday to continue plying local waters.

But there was no budging by either group on the issue of menhaden boats operating in local waters during king mackerel tournaments.

The flips that draw the kings close into shore are also sought by king fishermen for bait, and by the fisheries for their oil and protein. Local tournament participants believe there is a direct relationship between availability of baitfish and whether or not the menhaden boats are working or have recently worked an area.

Jule Wheatly of Beaufort Fisheries said his company couldn't offer to give up fishing for the number of days involved in the seven to 10 tournaments held in the Pender, New Hanover, Brunswick and Horry counties that attract sports fishermen to the area.

While Wheatly offered not to fish during the recent U.S. Open and Wrightsville Beach tournaments only, commercial fishermen reported

that menhaden boats from an unspecified company did operate during the event, said Suh, questioning the sincerity of the companies and their willingness to follow the terms

of any agreement.

Ocean Isle Beach had joined other Brunswick County beach towns in endorsing a resolution first adopted by the Town of Long Beach. The

*"To let menhaden fisheries from Dare County and elsewhere come in and take that resource when it benefits us locally is unconscionable. . . It seriously jeopardizes our town's fishing area."*

—Kendall Suh, OIB Commissioner

similar resolutions urge the Division of Marine Fisheries to set offshore limits for vessels operating off the beaches because of the potential for fish spills, which have been a problem in the past.

Long Beach Mayor Joan Altman said Tuesday that initially Long Beach had wanted to ban menhaden

fishing there, but thought the town would be more successful in getting the state to extend restrictions now in place in Dare County to Brunswick County.

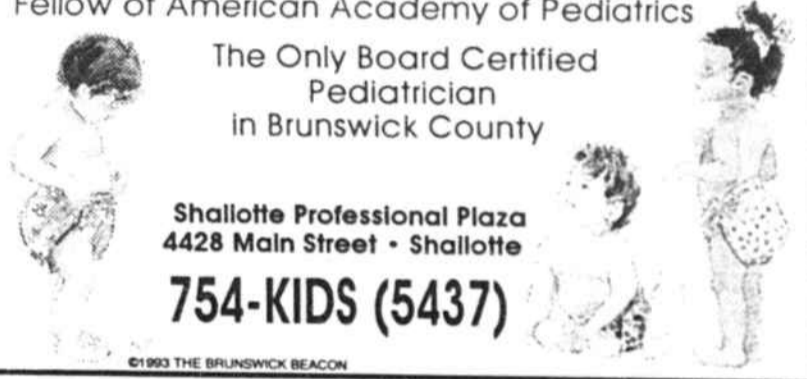
Rep. David Redwine stepped in, offering himself as mediator in an effort to reach a compromise agreement short of added state regulation.

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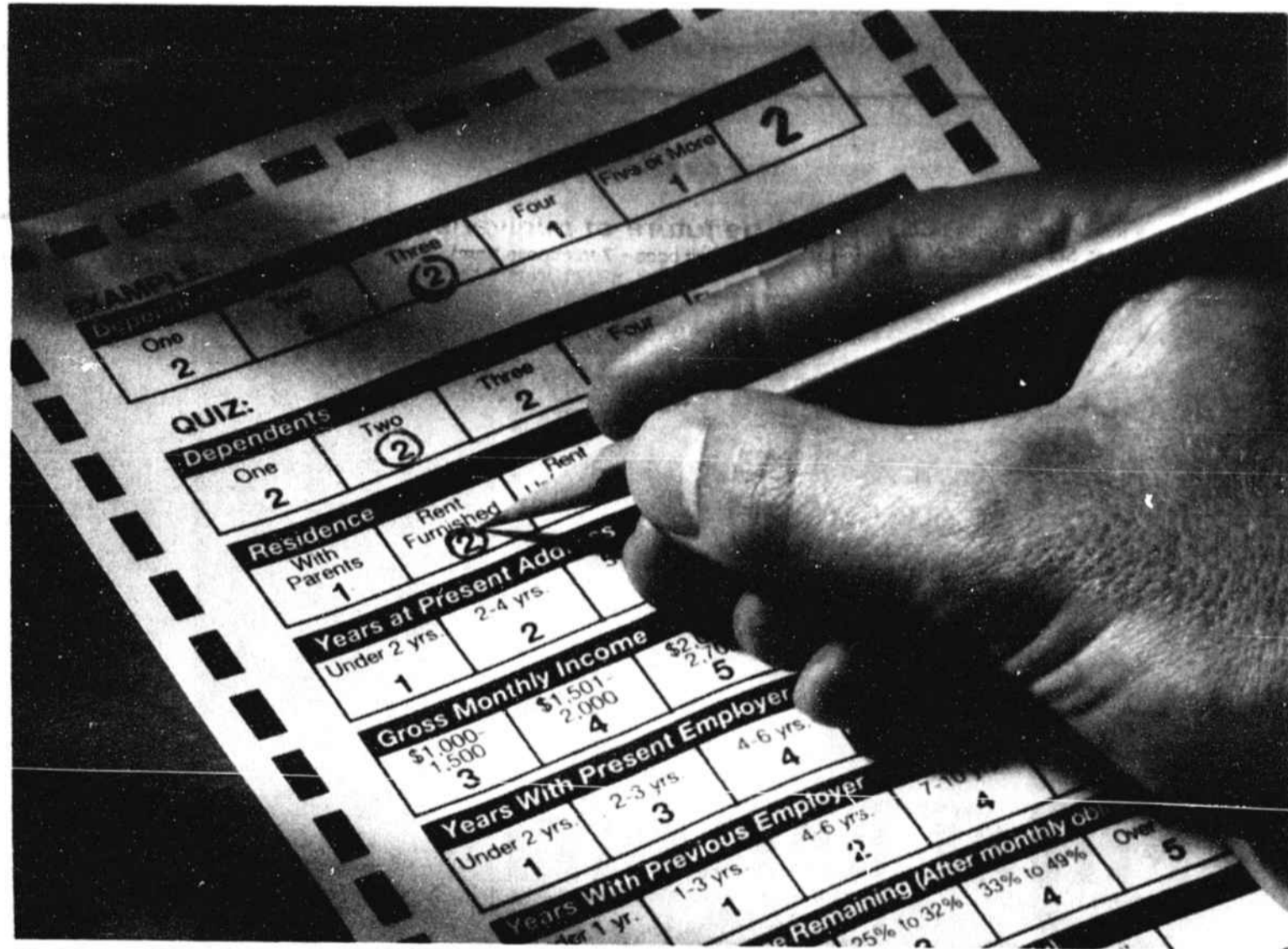
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**Dependents**

One	Two	Three	Four	Five or More
2	2	2	1	1

**Residence**

With Parents	Rent Furnished	Rent	Own Mortgage	Own Clear
1	2	3	4	5

**Years at Present Address**

Under 2 yrs	2-4 yrs	5-8 yrs	9-14 yrs	15 yrs or more
1	2	3	4	5

**Gross Monthly Income**

\$1,000-1,500	\$1,501-2,000	\$2,001-2,500	\$2,501-3,000	Over \$3,000
3	4	5	6	7

**Years With Present Employer**

Under 2 yrs	2-3 yrs	4-6 yrs	7-10 yrs	Over 10 yrs
1	3	4	5	6

**Years With Previous Employer**

Under 1 yr.	1-3 yrs	4-6 yrs	7-10 yrs	Over 10 yrs
0	1	2	4	5

**Monthly Income Remaining (After monthly obligations)**

Less than 10%	10% to 24%	25% to 32%	33% to 49%	Over 50%
1	2	3	4	5

**Bonus Points (Give one for each that apply)**

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## 'Little Giants' To Open Here This Weekend

"Little Giants," the film featuring Troy Simmons of Supply as one of its young ballplayers, opens this weekend at Surf Cinemas on Long Beach Road, Southport.

Show times are 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and 7 p.m. weekdays, said Sybil Mitchell Simmons, his mother.

Troy portrays Rasheed "Hot Hands" Hanon in the movie, which was filmed in California.

Troy will also appear in an NBC movie scheduled to air during the holiday season.

"One Christmas," based on the Truman Capote story of the same name, was filmed in Wilmington this fall. It features Katherine Hepburn, Henry Winkler and other well-known names. Troy won a supporting role as Toby, sidekick to a character named Buddy, played by T.J. Lowther.

## Shallotte Board Meeting Friday

Shallotte Aldermen will hold a special meeting Friday at 10:30 a.m. to discuss economic development grants with Chip Leavitt of Brunswick Electric Membership Corp.

The town board also will convene early for its regular meeting on Oct. 18. Aldermen will hold a joint meeting with the planning board at 6 p.m. to discuss the Shallotte Thoroughfare Plan.

## Beachcombers Club To Meet

The Beachcombers Shell Club of the South Brunswick Islands will hold its regular Tuesday, Oct. 18, meeting at Long Beach at noon.

Participants are being asked to bring a bag lunch. For directions, call Joy Wood at 579-1017.